Extension Service
West Virginia University.

Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Repairing Flooded Lawns

- In the early spring before lawns begin active growth, lawn grasses can withstand several days of being submerged without suffering serious damage. The more significant effect of flooding is likely to be the deposit of sediment, primarily silt (flood sediment) over lawn surfaces. This can lead to serious soil layering problems and even death of existing grass if deposits are deep enough.
- During summertime, any water that ponds on a lawn surface can cause significant damage or loss within a few hours. Ponding occurs in areas of poor drainage or results from water being left behind in valleys and depressions when floodwaters recede.
- Areas where the grass has been completely lost will need to be restored through reseeding or resodding.
- Once floodwaters recede, do not start working in the area immediately except to remove debris that may be a safety hazard, or to wash as much silt as possible from the lawn using a garden house. Wait until it is not soggy underfoot. The drying process may take several weeks. Damage assessment and recovery of the existing lawn may not be possible for a few weeks.
- Once the lawn has dried, thoroughly aerate it by going over it three times with an aerator to break up the silt crust. Repeat the process in early September and again the following spring.
- If the lawn has been completely covered with silt and the grass plants are barely visible or completely buried, you may want to establish a new lawn.
- Another problem with silt deposits is the introduction of potentially new and different weeds to the lawn. Pre-and/or post-emergence herbicides may be used where appropriate.
- Have a soil sample test done and follow the recommendations.
- When topsoil has been greatly eroded by floodwater, replace it to a depth of 4 to 6 inches late in the growing season.
- Soil that has been saturated by an oil or chemical spill should be deep plowed. For small areas, remove the soil and replace with new topsoil.

Adapted from resource materials developed by the University of Minnesota Extension Service entitled "Weather Impacts: Flood and Rain" and the Florida Extension Service entitled "The Disaster Handbook"